

CAREER GUIDE FOR COOKS, INSTITUTION AND CAFETERIA

SOC Code: 35-2012

Pay Band(s): 1, 2, and 3 ([Salary Structure](#))

Standard Occupational Description: Prepare and cook large quantities of food for institutions, such as schools, hospitals, or cafeterias.

Cooks and other food preparation positions in the Commonwealth are assigned to the following Roles in the [Food Service Career Group](#):

[Food Service Technician I](#)

[Food Service Technician II](#)

[Food Service Technician III](#)

Depending upon your individual training, education, knowledge, skills, abilities, and long-term career interests, you may also want to pursue other opportunities within the Commonwealth to include the following:

[Housekeeping and Apparel Services](#)

[Administrative and Office Support Services](#)

[Agricultural Services](#)

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND TASKS

(Technical and Functional Expertise)

Skills

Note: The technical and functional skills listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for **cooks** commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the skills listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

Most skills for this occupation are learned on the job.

1. Actively looking for ways to help people.
2. Using simple arithmetic.
3. Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.

Knowledge

Note: The technical and functional knowledge statements listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for **cooks** commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the knowledge listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

The **Knowledge** of:

1. Principles for providing satisfactory customer and personal services.

Abilities

Note: The technical and functional abilities listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for **cooks** commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the abilities listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

The **Ability** to:

1. Make fast, simple, repeated movements of the fingers, hands, and wrists.
2. Arrange things or actions in a certain order or pattern according to a specific rule or set of rules (e.g., patterns of numbers, letters, words, pictures, mathematical operations).
3. Communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
4. Quickly move your hand, your hand together with your arm, or your two hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble objects.
5. Read, write and follow instructions.

Tasks

Note: The following is a list of sample tasks typically performed by **cooks**. Employees in this occupation will not necessarily perform all of the tasks listed.

1. Cook foodstuffs according to menus, special dietary or nutritional restrictions, and numbers of portions to be served.
2. Clean and inspect galley equipment, kitchen appliances, and work areas in order to ensure cleanliness and functional operation.
3. Direct activities of one or more workers who assist in preparing and serving meals.
4. Bake breads, rolls, and other pastries.
5. Clean, cut, and cook meat, fish, and poultry.
6. Compile and maintain records of food use and expenditures.
7. Determine meal prices based on calculations of ingredient prices.
8. Requisition food supplies, kitchen equipment, and appliances, based on estimates of future needs.
9. Apportion and serve food to facility residents, employees, or patrons.
10. Monitor menus and spending in order to ensure that meals are prepared economically.

INTERESTED?

Like people, occupations have traits or characteristics. These characteristics give important clues about the nature of the work and work environment, and give you an opportunity to match your own personal interests to a specific occupation. When you choose a job in an occupation that matches your own interests you have taken an important step in planning a successful and rewarding career.

Jobs in the food industry are considered **Realistic, Conventional, and Social**.

The work is *Realistic* because it frequently involves work activities that include practical, hands-on problems and solutions. Cooks often deal with plants, animals, and real-world materials like wood, tools, and machinery. Many of these jobs do not involve a lot of paperwork or working closely with others.

The work is *Conventional* because it frequently involves following set procedures and routines. Conventional jobs can include working with data and details more than with ideas. Usually there is a clear line of authority to follow.

The work is *Social* because it frequently involves working with, communicating with, and teaching people. Social occupations often involve helping or providing service to others.

LICENSURE, REGISTRATION, OR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Generally this is not required for Cooks and other non-managerial food preparation positions in state government. However, if you're interested in a long-term career in food preparation, you should plan to become licensed or certified.

According to the Department of Labor's (DOL) *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, most chefs, cooks, and food preparation workers start as fast-food or short-order cooks, or in other lower skilled kitchen positions. These positions require little education or training, and most skills are learned on the job. After acquiring some basic food handling, preparation, and cooking skills, these workers may be able to advance to an assistant cook position.

The Occupational Outlook Handbook states that accreditation is an indication that a culinary program meets recognized standards regarding course content, facilities, and quality of instruction. To learn more, visit The American Culinary Federation's web site at <http://www.acfchefs.org/>

EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

A high school diploma is not normally required for most entry-level positions, however, it is recommended for those interested in career opportunities. The DOL advises that high school or vocational school courses in business arithmetic and business administration are particularly helpful. Many school districts, in cooperation with State departments of education, provide on-the-job training and summer workshops for cafeteria kitchen workers with aspirations of becoming cooks. Large corporations in the food service and hotel industries also offer paid internships and summer jobs, which can provide valuable experience.

Cooks, Chefs, Bakers, and other food preparation jobs are apprenticeable occupations. For more information on apprenticeship opportunities, visit the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry's web site at <http://www.doli.state.va.us> and click on Apprenticeship Programs.

If you're interested in pursuing a progressive career in this area, you may need a high level of skill and years of training and experience. Many chefs and cooks obtain their training through high school, post-high school vocational programs, college, or apprenticeship programs.

If you've have had courses in commercial food preparation you may be able to start in a cook or chef job without having to spend time in a lower skilled kitchen job. Education usually gives you an advantage when looking for jobs in better restaurants and hotels, where hiring standards often are high.

COMMONWEALTH COMPETENCIES

Competencies are a set of identified behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly and positively impact the success of employees and the organization. Competencies can be observed and measured. When consistently demonstrated, competencies make employees particularly effective in their work. Competencies help lay out a road map to career success. You can use the Commonwealth Competencies to help improve your individual performance by adopting behaviors that make high performing employees successful in their jobs. In this way, you can use the Commonwealth Competencies for your further professional development.

The Commonwealth Competencies are:

1. Technical and Functional Expertise
2. Understanding the Business
3. Achieving Results
4. Serving the Customer
5. Teamwork
6. Interpersonal and Communication Skills
7. Leadership and Personal Effectiveness

The above competencies may be applied to employees throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. They can be rank-ordered by agencies and hiring managers to represent the needs of a specific job. The rank ordering will change depending upon the occupation, an organization's priorities, the actual job requirements, and the supervisor's preferences.

Career success is both about what you do (applying your technical knowledge, skills, and ability) and how you do it (the consistent behaviors you demonstrate and choose to use) while interacting and communicating with others. Hopefully, by studying the Commonwealth competencies, identifying your developmental opportunities, and working to refine your own competence, you can take charge of your career!

For additional information about the **Commonwealth Competencies** go to: http://jobs.state.va.us/cc_planningctr.htm. For the competencies, we first list the competencies and then define each. Finally, we list competency indicators; to describe what successful performance looks like.

COMMONWEALTH CAREER PATH

Career opportunities in the Commonwealth are not limited to moving “up” to the next highest role and pay band, changing positions, or to becoming a supervisor. That’s because most roles describe a broad group of occupationally related positions that perform a range of work that requires increased knowledge and skills. For that reason, Commonwealth roles describe the career paths within the same or higher-level role for the same or different Career Group. The broad salary range and the Commonwealth’s pay practices provide flexibility in recognizing career development and advancement. ([Salary Structure](#))

For example:

PAY BAND	PRACTITIONER ROLES	MANAGEMENT ROLES
1	Food Service Technician I	
2	Food Service Technician II	
3	Food Service Technician III	Food Service Manager I
4		Food Service Manager II
5		Food Service Manager III

Sample Career Path

[Food Service Technician I](#)

The Food Service Technician I role provides career tracks for food service workers who clean, prepare, and serve food. Employees' duties range from entry level to journey level and include routine tasks of dishwashing and line-service to baking, roasting, steaming, frying, meat cutting, or assembly of food products to cashiering and training new employees in the area of food service.

[Food Service Technician II](#)

The Food Service Technician II role provides career tracks for employees that function as food services lead workers or supervisors and/or complete tasks associated with food preparation and service, such as preparing leftovers and preparing a variety of different meals and menus. Supervision is typically over one section, such as meat preparation or serving of meals.

[Food Service Technician III](#)

The Food Service Technician III role provides a career track for supervisors that acts as assistants to a manager and are responsible for supervising multiple sections of a comprehensive food service system, e.g., tray line, meat processing, or produce.

[Food Service Manager I](#)

The Food Service Manager I role provides career tracks for managers that oversee the preparation and distribution of food by managing a specialized unit(s) or the total food service operations for a small facility. Responsibilities also include budget management, ordering of supplies, and/or acting in an assistant capacity to a higher-level Food Service Manager.

[Food Service Manager II](#)

The Food Service Manager II role provides career tracks for managers responsible for overall performance, supervision and operation of a comprehensive food service unit or facility that may include other service sites. Examples of responsibilities of positions at this level include: proposing, initiating, and maintaining an operating budget; maximizing revenues; adhering to all nutritional standards; evaluating contract performance and compliance and acting as assistant to Food Service Managers III.

Food Service Manager III

The Food Service Manager III role provides career tracks for managers who plan and direct a major diversified food service program to managing a facility with multiple full service locations. Employees' responsibilities range from directing a major component, such as a food court to managing the entire food program for a facility having a diversified staff, large number of students, or residents to those having special nutritional needs to operations for multiple full service locations.

ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT:

O*NET (Occupational Information Network)

<http://online.onetcenter.org/>

Virginia Employment Commission

<http://www.alex.vec.state.va.us/>

Career One Stop

<http://www.careeronestop.org/>

Virginia Career Resource Network

<http://www.vacrn.net/>

The American Culinary Federation

<http://www.acfchefs.org/>

Virginia Department of Labor and Industry

<http://www.doli.state.va.us>